

# **Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Up the Rhine**

**Hood, Thomas**

**London, 1840**

To Gerard Brooke, Esq., Lemington, Hants

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-124956](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-124956)

like a good general, seized this favourable moment for his departure, and took his patient by the hand—"Well, *bon voyage*, and fine weather on the Rhine." "I shall never see it," cried my uncle, fast relapsing into a fit of hypochondriacism. "Phoo! phoo!—good bye, and a fair wind to Rotterdam." "I shall die at sea," returned my uncle; "at least if I reach the Nore. But mayhap I shall never get aboard. It is my belief I shan't live through the night," he bellowed after the doctor, who, foreseeing the point the argument must arrive at, had bolted out of the room and closed the door. "A clever man," said my uncle, when he was gone; "and no doubt understands my case, but as close as a fox. I only wish he would agree to my going suddenly—I should not die a bit the sooner for his giving me over."

Once more, farewell, with love to Emily from, dear Gerard, yours, &c.,

FRANK SOMERVILLE.

---

TO GERARD BROOKE, ESQ., LEMINGTON, HANTS.

MY DEAR BROOKE,—Your prophecy was a plausible one, but as the servant girl said, after looking out of window in Piccadilly, for the Lord Mayor's show, "it did not come to pass." Instead of returning to Kent, we actually sailed from London on Wednesday morning, by the Lord Melville; and here follows a log

of our memorable voyage. It will prove a long one I foresee, but so was our passage.

To believe our tourists and travellers, our Heads and our Trollopes, it is impossible to take a trip in a hoy, smack, or steamer, without encountering what are technically called characters. My first care, therefore, on getting aboard was to look out for originals; but after the strictest scrutiny among the passengers, there appeared none of any mark or likelihood. However, at Gravesend, a wherry brought us two individuals of some promise. The first was a tall, very thin man, evidently in bad health, or, as one of the sailors remarked, performing quarantine, his face being of the same colour as the yellow flag which indicates that sanitary excommunication; the other was a punchy, florid, red-wattled human cock-bird, who, according to the poultry-wife's practice, had seemingly had two pepper-corns thrust down his gullet on first leaving the shell, and had ever since felt their fiery influence in his gizzard. In default of their proper names, I immediately christened them, after Dandie Dinmont's two celebrated dogs, Pepper and Mustard. I had, however, but a short glimpse of their quality, for the yellow-face went forward amongst the seamen, whilst the red-visage dived downwards towards the steward's pantry. In the meantime we progressed merrily; and had soon passed that remarkably fine specimen of sea-urchin, the buoy at the Nore. But here the breeze died off, an occurrence, before the invention of steamers, of some moment;

indeed, in the old shoy-hoy times I was once at sea three days and two nights between London and Ramsgate, now a certain passage of a few hours. But now calms are annihilated, and so long as the movement party are inclined to dance, the steam-engine will find them in music; in fact, I could not help associating its regular tramp, tramp, tramp, with the tune of a galloppe I had recently performed. But these musings were suddenly diverted by the appearance of one of the most startling and singular phenomena that ever came under my notice. Imagine on one side the sea gently ruffled by a dying wind, into waves of a fine emerald green, playfully sparkling in the noon-tide sun; on the other hand, a terrific pitch-black mass rising abruptly from sea to sky, as if visibly dividing "the warm precincts of a cheerful day," from "the dark realms of Chaos and Old Night." But I am growing poetical. Suppose, then, if you have ever been under the white Flamborough Head, a black ditto, quite as bluff and as solid, and which you might have mistaken for some such stupendous headland but for the colour, and that on looking upwards you could find no summit. So strong was the impression on my own fancy, that when my aunt inquired where we were, I could not help answering, in allusion to the hue and build of the phenomenon, that we were off Blackwall. "You are right, sir," said a strange voice—"I have observed the same black and wall-like appearance in the West Indies, and it was the forerunner of a hurricane." I looked for this

prophet of ill omen, and saw the yellow-faced man at my elbow. "It would be a charity," exclaimed my aunt, "to give the captain warning." "He knows it well enough," said the stranger, "and so does the steward; yonder he runs to the caboose, to tell the cook to gallop his potatoes and scorch his roasts, that he may lay his cloth before the gale comes." "A gale, eh!" mumbled the red-face, who had just climbed from below, with his mouth still full of victuals—"Why don't the captain put back?" "We have gone about once," said the yellow-face, "to run into Margate; but the master thinks, perhaps, that he can edge off, and so escape the storm, or only catch a flap with its skirts. There it comes!" and he pointed towards the black mass now rapidly suffusing itself over the surface of the sea, which became first black, and then white, beneath its shadow; whilst a few faint forks of lightning darted about between the base of the cloud and the water. The waves immediately round us had gradually subsided into a dead calm, and there was no perceptible motion but the vibration from the engine: when suddenly, with a brief but violent rush of wind the vessel gave a deep lurch, and thenceforward indulged in a succession of rolls and heavings which took speedy effect on the very stoutest of our passengers. "Renounce me!" said he, "if I like the look of it!" "Or the feel of it, either," said a voice in an under tone. The red-faced man turned still redder—fixed an angry eye on the speaker's complexion, and was evidently meditat-

ing some very personal retort ; but whatever it might be, he was abruptly compelled to give it, with other matters, to the winds. If there be such a thing as love at first sight, there certainly are antipathies got up at quite as short a notice ; and the man with the red face had thus conceived an instinctive aversion to the man with the yellow one, at whom he could not even look without visible symptoms of dislike. " And how do you feel, sir ?" inquired the sufferer as I passed near him, just after one of his paroxysms. " Perfectly well as yet." " The better for you, sir," said the peppery man, rather sharply. " As for me, I'm as sick as a dog ! I should not mind *that*, if it was in regular course ; but there's that yellow fellow—just look at him, sir—there's a liver for you !—there's disordered bile ! a perfect walking Jaundice ! *He's* the man to be sick, and yet he's quite well and comfortable—and I'm the man to be well—and here I can't keep anything ! I assure you, sir, I have naturally a strong stomach, like a horse, sir—never had an indigestion—never ! and as for appetite, I've been eating and drinking ever since I came on board ! And yet you see how I am ! And there's that saffron-coloured fellow, I do believe it was his sickly face that first turned me—I do, upon my honour—there's that yellow-fevered rascal—renounce me ! if he isn't going down to dinner !"

As had been predicted, we dined early, and, *par conséquent*, on half-dressed vegetables, a piece of red beef, superficially done brown, and a very hasty pudding.

The coarse inferior nature of the fare did not escape my uncle's notice: "but I suppose," said he, "a keen salt water appetite is not particular as to feeding on prime qualities." The words were scarcely uttered when he suddenly turned pale, and laid down his knife and fork. Never having been at sea before, and aware of some unusual sensations within, he instantly attributed them to the old source, and whispered to me to forbid my stirring. "I am a dead man—but don't alarm your aunt." Guessing how the matter stood, I let him scramble by himself to the deck, from which in a few minutes he returned, filled a glass of wine, drank it off, and then gave me a significant nod. "Another reprieve, Frank. It's very unpleasant, but I'm convinced what has just happened was the saving of my life. The circulation was all but gone, when a sort of convulsion of the stomach set it a-going again, and gave me time to rally." "Accidents that will happen at sea," remarked our skipper. "And on shore, too," replied my uncle very solemnly,—“Captain, I have been dying suddenly these ten years.” The captain screwed up his lips for a whistle, but it was not audible. "And for my part, sir," said our Daffodil, "I envy you your apoplexy. *I* am going, going, going, going, by inches."

At this announcement the cabin boy hastily pulled out an assortment of basins, selected a large blue and white one, and placed it conveniently at the feet of the speaker. From the first glimpse of the sickly-looking

passenger, our steward's mate had pitched upon him for a pet patient,—he had watched him, listened to him, and whenever "Boy" was summoned in a strange voice, he invariably tried first at the yellow man. To his surprise, however, the latter only gave the utensil a slight touch with his foot, saying, "It will do very well at a pinch, and boy—(yes, sir)—another time when you bring me such a thing as this—(yes, sir)—let me have the kettle along with it,—(yes, sir)—the sugar, a few lemons, and a bottle of rum." The boy, in sea phrase, was taken all aback. "Renounce me," whispered the Red-face who happened to sit next me, "renounce me if he don't mean punch: I *can't* stand him!—I can't upon my soul!" and off he rushed again upon deck.

By this time the motion of the vessel had considerably increased, and between fear and curiosity, and certain more physical motives, the whole of the company successively went above to enjoy what proved to be a very bad look out. The whole sky had now gone into saffres, and like Hamlet seemed contending with "a sea of troubles." On the lee side, swaying by the backstay, stood the man with the red face, turned by recent exertion almost into purple. Instead of the languor and depression usually ascribed to the sea malady, it seemed to put him up instead of down, and his temper rose with his stomach. "I am worse than ever!" he said to me almost choking between his affliction and his passion, "and there's that yellow wretch,



quite composed, with a d——d cigar in his mouth! I can't understand it, sir—it's against nature. As for me,—I shall die of it! I know I shall!—I shall burst a vessel, sir. I thought I had just now—but it was only the pint of port!"

As he spoke the vessel shipped a heavy sea, and heeled over almost on her beam ends. "I suppose," said my uncle, "that's what they call a water-spout." "It's a squall!" said the Yellow-face. "It's a female scream," cried my aunt, wringing her hands, and in reality we heard a shrill cry of distress that drew us in a body towards the fore-part of the vessel. "It's the lady o' title," said the mate, "she was above 'sociating with the passengers, and preferred sitting in her own carriage—lucky she didn't go overboard coach and all." My worthy uncle indignantly declared the thing to be impossible. "Do you pretend to say there's a human being shut up in that carriage, because she won't even condescend to be drowned along with her fellow creatures?" By way of answer, the mate and assistants contrived to drag the human being out of the vehicle, and certainly, between fright and a good ducking, she was a very forlorn-looking specimen of her order. "Well," muttered my uncle, "this is dignity with a vengeance! I should have thought even a lady of title might prefer a comfortable cabin to sitting in such a bathing-machine, even with coronets on the top." "Poor thing," interposed my aunt, "it's the nature of her bringing up." "No doubt of it!" retorted

Nunkle, "but to my mind it's an unchristian bringing up that prepares one so badly for going down." This shot silenced my poor aunt, but it did not prevent her from paying all possible attention to the Woman of Quality, on her way to the ladies' cabin, where she was deposited, at her own request, in a high berth. And so ended for the present the little episode of Lady D— and her own carriage.

And now, my dear Gerard, imagine us all to creep like the exclusive lady into our own narrow dormitories, not that we were sleepy, but the violent pitching of the ship made it difficult, if not impossible, for any mere landsman to sit or stand. Indeed it would not have been easy to sleep, in spite of the concert that prevailed. First, a beam in one corner seemed taken in labour, then another began groaning,—plank after plank chimed in with its peculiar creak,—every bulkhead seemed to fret with an ache in it—sometimes the floor complained of a strain—next the ceiling cried out with a pain in its joints—and then came a general squeezing sound as if the whole vessel was in the last stage of collapse. Add to these the wild howling of the wind through the rigging, till the demon of the storm seemed to be playing coronachs over us on an Æolian harp,—the clatter of hail,—the constant rushes of water around and overhead—and at every uncommon pitch, a chorus of female shrieks from the next cabin. To describe my own feelings, the night seemed spent between dozing and delirium. When I closed my eyes I had dreams of

nightmares, not squatting ones merely, but vicious jades, that kicked, plunged, reared with and rolled over me: when I opened them, I beheld stools, trunks, bags, endowed with supernatural life, violently dancing—change sides, down the middle, back again, all round, and then, *saute qui peut*, in a sudden panic making a general rush at the cabin stairs. In the midst of this tumult struggled a solitary human figure, sometimes sitting, sometimes kneeling, sometimes rolling, or desperately clinging to the table,—till the table itself burst its bonds, threw a preliminary summerset, and taking a loose sofa between its legs, prepared for a waltz. It was a countryman of Van Tromp who had thus resolved not to be drowned in his bed; and as even fright becomes comical by its extravagance, I could not help laughing, in spite of my own miseries, to see the poor Dutchman at any extraordinary plunge clapping his hands as ecstasically as if it had been meant for applause. To tell the truth, the vessel occasionally gave such an awful lurch, that I seriously thought we should be left in it. At last towards morning our terrors were brought to a climax by a tremendous crash overhead, followed by a prodigious rush of water, under which the Lord Melville seemed to reel and stagger as if it had been wine, whilst part of the briny deluge rushed down into the cabin and flooded the lower beds. Our *claqueur*, poor Mynheer, clapped his hands long and loudly, taking it of course for the catastrophe of the piece. The vessel had been pooped, as it is called, by a monstrous

sea, which had torn four men from the helm, where they were steering with a long iron tiller, and had thrown them luckily almost to the funnel instead of over the quarter, when they must inevitably have perished. On such angles, in this world, depend our destinies!

On going on deck I found the captain and the pilot anxiously looking out for the buoys which mark the entrance into the Maas. "I congratulate you, sir," said the yellow face,—“steam has saved us—mere canvas has not been so fortunate,” and he pointed to the hull of a large ship with only her lower masts standing; she had gone down in shoal water, her stern resting on the bottom, whilst her bows still lifted with the waves. “And the crew?” The yellow man significantly shook his head—“no boat could live in such a sea.” For the first time, Gerard, I felt sick—sick at heart. I have seen many completer wrecks, with their naval anatomy quite laid bare, but from that very circumstance, their wooden ribs and vertebræ being thus exposed, they looked more like the skeletons of stranded marine monsters; whereas, in the present instance, the vessel still preserved its habitable shape, and fancy persisted in peopling it with human creatures, moving, struggling, running to and fro, and at length in desperation clinging to the rigging of those now bare spars. I had even painted, Campbell-like, that wretched character, a Last Man, perched in dreary survivorship in the maintop, when, in startling unison with the thought, a voice

muttered in my ear, "Yes! there he is!—he's been up there all night—and every soul but himself down below!" The speaker was the red-faced man. "A pretty considerable bad night, sir," said his Antipathy by way of a morning salutation. "An awful one, indeed," said the red face,—“of course you've been sick at last.” “Not a notion of it.” “Egad, then,” cried my uncle, who had just emerged from the companion, “you must have some secret for it worth knowing!” “I guess I have,” answered the other, very quietly. “Renounce me, if I didn't think so!” exclaimed the red face in a tone of triumph—“it can't be done fairly without some secret or other, and I'd give a guinea, that's to say a sovereign, to know what it is.” “It's a bargain,” said the yellow face, coolly holding out his hand for the money, which was as readily deposited in his palm, and thence transferred to a rather slenderly furnished squirrel-skin purse. “Now then,” said the Carnation. “Why then,” said the Yellow Flower of the Forest, with a peculiar drawl through the nose, “you must jist go to sea, as I have done, for the best thirty years of your life.” The indignation with which this recipe was received was smothered in a general burst of laughter from all within hearing. Luckily we were now summoned to breakfast, where we found my Aunt, who expatiated eloquently on the horrors of the past night. “I really thought,” she said, “that I was going to poor George.” “Amongst sailors, ma'am,” said our rough captain, very innocently, “we call him Old Davy.”

In consequence of the sea running so high, we were unable to proceed to Rotterdam by the usual channel; and were occupied during a great part of the second day in going at half speed through the canals. Tedious as was this course, it afforded us a sight of some of the characteristic scenery of that very remarkable country called Holland. We had abundant leisure to observe the picturesque craft, with their high cabins, and cabin windows well furnished with flower-pots and frows,—in fact, floating houses;—while the real houses, scarcely above the water level, looked like so many family arks that had gone only ashore, and would be got off next tide. These dwellings of either kind looked scrupulously clean, and particularly gay; the houses, indeed, with their bright pea-green doors and shutters, shining, brand new, as if by common consent, or some clause in their leases, they had all been freshly painted within the last week. But probably they must thus be continually done in oil to keep out the water,—the very Dryads, to keep them dry, being favoured with a coat, or rather pantaloons, of sky-blue or red, or some smart colour, on their trunks and lower limbs. At times, however, nothing could be seen but the banks, till perchance you detected a steeple and a few chimneys, as if a village had been sowed there, and was beginning to come up. The vagaries of the perspective, originating in such an arrangement, were rather amusing. For instance, I saw a ruminating cow apparently chewing the top of a tree, a Quixotic donkey attacking a windmill, and a

wonderful horse, quietly reposing and dozing with a weathercock growing out of his back. Indeed, it is not extravagant to suppose that a frog, without hopping, often enjoys a bird's-eye view of a neighbouring town. So little was seen of the country, that my Aunt, in the simplicity of her heart, inquired seriously, "Where's Holland?" "It ought to be hereabouts, madam," said the yellow face, "if it wasn't swamped in the night." "Swamped, indeed," said the red face; "it's sinful to mistrust Providence, but renounce me if I could live in such a place without an everlasting rainbow overhead to remind me of the promise."—"They'd be drowned to-morrow, sir," said the captain, "if they wasn't continually driving piles, and building dams, like so many beavers on two legs." "They have all the ways of beavers, sure enough," chimed in my Uncle, "and, egad!" pointing to a round-sterned fellow at work on the bank, "they have the same breadth of tail."

Amongst other characteristic features of the landscape, if it had land enough to deserve the name, we frequently saw a solitary crane or heron at the water's edge, watching patiently for food, or resting on one leg in conscious security. I pointed them out to my Uncle, who, sportsman-like, was taking aim at a stork with his forefinger, when a hand was suddenly interposed before what represented the muzzle of the gun. It was the act of Mynheer the Claqueur. My Uncle reddened, but said nothing, though he afterwards favoured me

with his opinion. "The Dutchman was right. I have been thinking it over; and I have a misgiving we are too wasteful of animal lives. In England, now, those birds would not live a week without being peppered by the first fellow with a gun." "Because," said I, "we can sleep in England in spite of Philomel; but the Dutch nightingales are more noisy, besides being as numerous as their frogs, and they are glad to preserve any birds that will thin them out." "No, no, Frank," replied my Uncle, gravely shaking his head; "it's beyond a joke. I didn't say so before the Dutchman, because I don't choose to let down my native land: there's plenty of travellers to do that with a pretended liberality;—but I don't set up for a cosmo-polite, which, to my mind, signifies being polite to every country except your own." "I have never heard the English accused," suggested your humble servant, "of wilful cruelty." "Not as to humankind, Frank: not as to humankind; but haven't we exterminated the bastards—I mean to say bustards; and haven't we got rid of the black cock of the walk—I should say the woods? As for the storks, they're the most filial and affectionate birds to old parents in all nature, and I take shame to myself for only aiming at them with a finger. God knows, I ought to have more fellow-feeling for a sudden death!"

It was night ere we arrived at Rotterdam, safe and well, with the exception of my Uncle's umbrella and great-coat, supposed to have been washed overboard by the same sea that endangered the lady and her carriage.



Whilst the rest of the family comfortably established themselves at the Hôtel des Pays Bas, I took a hasty ramble by moonlight through the city, and have thrown my first impressions into verse, which, according to agreement, please to present with my dear love to your sister. In plainer, but not less sincere prose, accept the hearty regard of,

My dear Gerard, yours ever truly,

FRANK SOMERVILLE.

---

TO \* \* \* \* \*

I GAZE upon a city,  
 A city new and strange ;  
 Down many a wat'ry vista  
 My fancy takes a range ;  
 From side to side I saunter,  
 And wonder where I am ;—  
 And can *you* be in England,  
 And I at Rotterdam !

Before me lie dark waters,  
 In broad canals and deep,  
 Whereon the silver moonbeams  
 Sleep, restless in their sleep :  
 A sort of vulgar Venice  
 Reminds me where I am,—  
 Yes, yes, you are in England,  
 And I'm at Rotterdam.

Tall houses, with quaint gables,  
Where frequent windows shine,  
And quays that lead to bridges,  
And trees in formal line,  
And masts of spicy vessels,  
From distant Surinam,—  
All tell me you're in England,  
And I'm at Rotterdam.

Those sailors,—how outlandish  
The face and garb of each!  
They deal in foreign gestures,  
And use a foreign speech;  
A tongue not learned near Isis,  
Or studied by the Cam,  
Declares that you're in England,  
But I'm at Rotterdam.

And now across a market  
My doubtful way I trace,  
Where stands a solemn statue,  
The Genius of the place;  
And to the great Erasmus  
I offer my salam,—  
Who tells me you're in England,  
And I'm at Rotterdam.

The coffee-room is open,  
I mingle with the crowd;

The dominoes are rattling,  
 The hookahs raise a cloud ;  
 A flavour, none of Fearon's,  
 That mingles with my dram,  
 Reminds me you're in England,  
 But I'm in Rotterdam.

Then here it goes, a bumper,—  
 The toast it shall be mine,  
 In Schiedam, or in Sherry,  
 Tokay, or Hock of Rhine,—  
 It well deserves the brightest  
 Where sunbeam ever swam,—  
 " The girl I love in England,"  
 I drink at Rotterdam.

---

TO MISS WILMOT, AT WOODLANDS, NEAR  
 BECKENHAM, KENT.

MY DEAR MARGARET,—As I predicted, our travels began in trouble, and from the course of events, will end, I expect, in the same way. What could be more unfortunate than to come to the Continent in a storm so awful that I cannot bear to think of it, much less to describe it, beyond saying, that between raging winds and waves, and thunder and lightning, nature itself seemed on the point of being wrecked ! But I must not